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THE ORIGIN OF THE "BOOK OF MORMON"

By PERRY BENJAMIN PIERCE

The Palmyra upon the title-page of the original *Book of Mormon* (plate xxx), of which an edition of five hundred copies was printed, was not that great and ancient city of Syria, the elder sister of Damascus, "Tadmor in the Wilderness," but, at the time of the publication of the work, in 1830, a small village in western New York, in the midst of the Indian country of the Six Nations, then recently opened to white settlement by people from the eastern states, and from the nearer settlements in the eastern part of the state of New York itself. It was one of the new stations on the popular trail to the famous garden spot of the west, the wonderful Genesee country, the western Eldorado of that day and time. Only thirty years had elapsed since the beginning of the century. The wonder tales of productive soil and amazing crops had stirred all New England. The sterile acres and scanty crops of that land of the Pilgrim and the Puritan did not attract their descendants to abide at home and starve, when a few weeks or months of travel would give them possession of such fertile valleys and sun-kissed slopes as report located in the wilds of the beautiful Genesee country.

The old Surveyor General of the state of New York, who, happening to carry in his camp-outfit a copy of Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, bestowed out of it upon his daily work the names of all the old-world worthies, heroes, cities, towns, and countries,—Rome, Utica, Syracuse, Pompey, Homer, Manlius, Camillus, Tully, Cicero, Athens, Sparta, Troy, Ilion,—little knew when he left the name "Palmyra" upon the cross-roads on the Genesee trail that he was giving name to the locality

THE
BOOK OF MORMON:

AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF MOR-
MON, UPON PLATES TAKEN FROM
THE PLATES OF NEPHI.

Wherefore it is an abridgment of the Record of the People of Nephi; and also of the Lamanites; written to the Lamanites, which are a remnant of the House of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile; written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of Prophecy and of Revelation. Written, and sealed up, and hid up unto the LORD, that they might not be destroyed; to come forth by the gift and power of God, unto the interpretation thereof; sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the LORD, to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift of God; an abridgment taken from the Book of Ether.

Also, which is a Record of the People of Jared, which were scattered at the time the LORD confounded the language of the people when they were building a tower to get to Heaven; which is to shew unto the remnant of the House of Israel how great things the LORD hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the LORD, that they are not cast off forever; and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting Himself unto all nations. And now if there be fault, it be the mistake of man; wherefore condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of CHRIST.

BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR,
AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR.

PALMYRA:

PRINTED BY E. B. GRANDIN, FOR THE AUTHOR.

1830.

which future generations of men should know as the birthplace of the *Book of Mormon*, whose "author and proprietor" should be the founder of a great and wide-extending "religion" dominating the lives and actions of hundreds of thousands of men and women in the heart of a nation of many millions. And yet so it was. Palmyra was the place of publication of the Mormons' *El Koran*, the prophet Joe Smith's "*Book of Mormon*," a brief examination of which, its origin and its place in the literature of the world, it is proposed to give.

Bring to your mind's eye the place and the people. Less than thirty years of such settlement on the frontiers of civilization, at that time, had gone by. The wilderness had given way in places to farms hewn out of the primeval forests, and villages had sprung up with schools, churches, and post-offices,—not, however, as they exist in this day of rapid transit and swift news transmission; for in 1806 it took a month and cost a dollar to carry a letter by mail from Boston to Cincinnati. The people were not endowed with the goods of this world: they had, indeed, like all settlers in a new territory, gone to the new land to accumulate for themselves and their posterity what they had failed to win in their old homes in the east. And there were no foreigners to influence their civilization. The Irish were still in Ireland; the Germans had not arrived; the French in the New World were all in Canada and Louisiana.

And so it came to pass that the few hundred settlers who had established their homes in the new land in Ontario county,¹ New York, were a homogeneous people, mostly from the nearer New England states. The characteristics of the domestic and religious life of New England were all strongly developed in the new colony. The leading families were there,—the lawyer,

¹ Ontario county originally extended to the lake of the same name. In 1823, however, the State Legislature erected the northern portion into a new county and gave it the name of Wayne, in commemoration of the distinguished Revolutionary soldier. Palmyra is its county seat.

the doctor, the minister, and those who with them made up the social life of the community. The hard-working tiller of the soil was largely predominant. There was, however, in the new and crude organic union of the forces of civilization, but very narrow space for the idle, the indolent, the ne'er-do-well, whose instincts ever lead him far from the exercise of that energy which lies at the base of all ambition to climb the ladder of life. His presence in the midst of such a community was at once known and resented. He was not welcome. He had nothing to part with which was of value to those to whom he might offer it. His name was known to his neighbors, and his secret life could not be hidden. If he toiled not, and had no income, the question, How does he live? was not long in receiving an answer in such a community as this.

To Palmyra came from Windsor county, Vermont, in 1815, a middle-aged farmer named Joseph Smith, with his wife and a large family of children. They settled on a tract of land in the southern part of the township near the adjoining township of Manchester. The years passed by, but the family did not prosper; the woods were not chopped down; the soil was not tilled; the crops did not grow. The children did, however, for in that land no one ever suffered for lack of food. The boys grew up without desire for education; if they were sent to school, their days were passed in the woods with guns and dogs. The father, with native Vermont shrewdness, was a hunter and trapper before them, and soon knew the haunts of all the wild game of the country, as well as its natural scenery. If the Smiths' crops failed to come to a harvest for lack of care, the family did not allow that to interfere with their means of living. Their neighbors were always well supplied, and "borrowing" was always possible.

One of the sons of this family was Joseph Smith Jr. He was born in Sharon, Vermont, December 23, 1805, and was, therefore, in his tenth year when his father emigrated to Ontario

county, New York. And in this environment grew up the "author and proprietor" of the *Book of Mormon*.

A French writer, not long ago, having occasion to criticize the English people from the French point of view, exclaimed: "What a wonderful people those English are! They have invented fifty religions and not one gravity!" Have the descendants of the English, in crossing the seas, changed the traditions of the race? Is not the invention of "religions" still going on, with as much prospect of continuance in Greater Britain as in Great Britain itself?

The *Book of Mormon* was printed in 1830. Joseph Smith Jr was at the time twenty-four years of age. He was, according to some authorities, unable to read or write; by others it is asserted that while able to read and write to some extent he did so with difficulty. By no authority is it contended that he was in any respect more than very poorly educated. And yet, in this publication, we have a work of the greatest anthropological, ethnological, and archeological interest, struck off in one complete, full, perfect act, at the hands of an uneducated, uncultivated, country boor of equivocal reputation and low origin. It is not, like the Christian Bible, the product of fifteen centuries of growth, a fabric woven together out of the shredded history of many races, nations, and tongues, and at the hands of a hundred writers strung along the centuries over a period of time almost inconceivable in duration. On the contrary, this *Book of Mormon* purports to be a record delivered to Joseph Smith Jr when he was in a vision on September 21, 1823, at the age of eighteen years, by an angel of God, named "Moroni," said record being, in the words of the author—

a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang. . . . He also said that there were two stones in silver bows (and these stones fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim,) deposited with the plates, and the

possession and use of these stones was what constituted seers in ancient or former times, and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book. . . . Again, he told me that when I got those plates of which he had spoken,—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled,—I should not show them to any person ; neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim ; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them. If I did, I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind, that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place *again* when I visited it.—*Times and Seasons*, Vol. III, p. 729.

These are Smith's own words. But, while the vision transpired September 21, 1823, and he went directly to the hillside situate between the townships of Manchester and Palmyra, and discovered therein the gold plates lying in a stone box, he was not permitted by the angel to take the plates into his possession until the lapse of the full period of four years, viz., until September 22, 1827. During these four years he was preparing himself for his future work, having married Miss Emma Hale, January 18, 1827, as one of the final steps of such preparation. Having received the plates from the angel, he was now enabled to set to work as prophet, seer, and interpreter, with his Urim and Thummim breastplate, to translate the symbols to his clerk, Oliver Cowdery, who prepares the manuscript from which the *Book of Mormon* is to be printed.

But no eye save his own may behold the golden leaves of this mystic book ; they are kept locked in a trunk, and the trunk and Smith are screened from all inspection behind a curtain during the hours of inspiration and dictation. How this was arranged in the *res angusta domi* of the populous Smith family, now enlarged by the addition of another wife for another son, we are not told. It was known in the community that all the Smiths dwelt together in a common log-house, not very large, and containing not more than two rooms with a loft. Surely, never was heavenly revelation accompanied by greater earthly deprivation.

In the meantime, the community at large, actuated by those characteristic impulses which had accompanied its individuals from their old domiciles in New England, had scented the rumor that "old Joe Smith's Joe" was "getting up"—had indeed gotten up—a new Bible. We may be sure that current gossip was not slow in its endeavors to probe the mystery of such a rare report.

In 1861 I visited the site of the hill out of which the alleged "plates" were allegedly taken. Over thirty years had then passed since the new religion had been launched and the *Book of Mormon* given to the world. But the country neighborhood still had, at that time, many living people who, while they cared very little for "Mormonism," had a very definite remembrance of the Smith family,—father, mother, and sons. I talked with men who were contemporaries of the boys,—“went to school” with them, as they phrased it, always qualifying the statement by the additional one, as one old farmer put it: “None of them Smith boys ever went to school when they could get out of it.” Indeed, I found no person willing to say a complimentary word of any member of the Smith family.

The hill from which the “plates” are said to have been taken is a gentle elevation (not unlike many others in that part of the state of New York), of limestone formation, smoothly rounded, and cultivated over its entire surface, barring a small chestnut grove, which, when I saw it, covered a portion of its greatest elevation. The *Book of Mormon* is authority for the statement that there are many more plates “hidden up”—plates not yet revealed to the eye of mortal man. If these plates are in such hillsides as those in the township of Manchester, New York, they are most effectually “hidden up”; for there are thousands of just such likely hillsides all over the state.

But let us return to the manuscript, which in some way has fallen into the hands of the “author and proprietor” at some date prior to 1830. In that day, as in this, it takes money to pay

the printer, even though the printer be a "scrub" and does not have a trades union to see to it that the pay is always forthcoming. The manuscript is complete; the plates have been "shewn" unto the eight witnesses and handled with their hands, and the same eight witnesses have "hefted" the plates and seen the engravings thereon, all of curious workmanship and of the appearance of ancient work—but there is no money in the Smith family to pay the printing bills. There is a little printing office in Palmyra, but no angel can be invoked to subsidize the printer. The gold plates might have been an acceptable equivalent for the work done, but they could not be thus utilized, for they had been "hidden up" again, as soon as they had been translated.

Finally, a convert to the new faith is found in a well-to-do farmer, Martin Harris, who, having been in succession a Quaker, a Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Redemptorist, and last of all a Universalist, now becomes security for the publication of the manuscript, and lo, we have the *Book of Mormon*! Of this edition five hundred copies were issued and the propaganda was started. The breastplate, with its Urim and Thummim attachment, was miraculously provided as the instrument through which the prophet, seer, and interpreter should translate the Adamic characters on the golden plates into the English tongue. Notwithstanding this divine instrument, a more than accidental trace of the vernacular of the backwoods of western New York is found on every page of the work. Solecisms which would delight the heart of the modern dialect writer crop out in every sentence. In turning the leaves a well-nigh new orthography stares the reader in the face. Out of its 588 pages I venture to assert that barely one is free from one or more cacographic examples.

And that the Urim and Thummim breastplate did not aid the grammarless translator, or his uninspired amanuensis, or even his village printer, is evident from such eccentric irregularities and bold departures from the "well of English undefiled" as:

"*thou remembereth*" (page 27); "and I have *not* written *but* a small part of the things I saw" (page 35); "therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they *had* ought" (*ibid.*); "and the Devil is the *preparator* of it" (page 38); "and it came to pass that I did make tools out of the ore which I *did molton* out of the rock" (page 43); "and upon the plates which I made, I *did engraven* the record of my father" (page 50); "I can *not* write *but* a little of my words" (page 129); "and it came to pass that the servant of the Lord of the vineyard *done* according to the word of the Lord" (page 132); "he had *somewhat* contentions among his own people" (page 152); "and this he *done*" (page 225); "and the words of Amulek which *was* declared unto the people" (page 245); "now the object of these lawyers *were* to get gain" (page 251); "if it were possible that our first parents could have *went* forth" (page 257); "that there might *not* be *no more* sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (page 303); "O ye *had ought* to begin to howl and mourn" (page 431); "Behold I *were* about to write them all which were *engraven*" (page 506); "Stabbed by a garb of secrecy" (page 431).

I pause, out of breath, with this result of a most cursory inspection of the inspired pages under examination. I have before me, however, a work prepared by Lamoni Call, Bountiful, Utah, compiler of *The Gospel in a Nut Shell*, August, 1898, containing a list of over three thousand changes, found in the *Book of Mormon* of the latest edition, from the text as printed direct from the manuscript furnished the printer in 1830.

The Mormons have from the first repudiated with great intensity of feeling the Gentile charge that their book is but an illiterate plagiarism of a parodic romance on the Old Testament written as a literary diversion in the early part of this century by a superannuated Congregationalist minister, Rev. Solomon Spalding, entitled *The Manuscript Found*. One of their best writers has devoted great pains in the preparation of a book with the title *The Myth of the Manuscript Found*, wherein to prove that

there could be no possible connection between *The Manuscript Found* and *The Book of Mormon*.

While I believe the evidence to be overwhelming, and that it establishes beyond the shadow of a doubt the fact that, had Spalding's romance never been written, Joseph Smith Jr would never have found the box of plates in the Manchester hillside, I do not propose to rest my present examination on this contention. It is my purpose to base the examination on the *Book of Mormon* itself, as it stands in the original edition, direct from the hand of its "author and proprietor," Joseph Smith Jr.

To open this examination, let us call as first witness, Elder George Reynolds, the distinguished Mormon author of *The Myth of the Manuscript Found*, who, in establishing the veracity of the translation of the prophet, seer, and interpreter, thus testifies (pages 58-59 of his work):

In March, 1881, two gentlemen, named Kelley, residing in Michigan, for their own satisfaction visited the neighborhood where Joseph spent his youth and questioned the older residents who were acquainted with the Smith family as to their knowledge of the character of Joseph, his parents, and his brothers and sisters. Their interviews with numerous parties who claim to have known Joseph were afterwards published. . . . We here append a few extracts from these interviews.

"What did you know about the Smiths, Mr. Gilbert?"

"I knew nothing myself; have seen Joseph Smith a few times, but not acquainted with him. Saw Hyrum quite often. I am the party that set the type from the original manuscript for the Book of Mormon. They translated it in a cave. I would know that manuscript to-day if I should see it. The most of it was in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting. Some in Joseph's wife's; a small part though. Hyrum Smith always brought the manuscript to the office; he would have it under his coat, and all buttoned up as carefully as though it was so much gold. He said at the time that it was translated from plates by the power of God, and they were very particular about it. We had a great deal of trouble with it. It was not punctuated at all. They did not know anything about punctuation, and we had to do that ourselves."

"Well; did you change any part of it when you were setting the type?"

"No, sir; we never changed it at all."

"Why did you not change it and correct it?"

"Because they would not allow us to; they were very particular about that. We never changed it in the least. Oh, well; there might have been one or two words that I changed the spelling of; I believe I did change the spelling of one, and perhaps two, but no more."

"Did you set all the type, or did some one help you?"

"I did the whole of it myself, and helped to read the proof, too; there was no one who worked at that but myself. Did you ever see one of the first copies? I have one here that was never bound. Mr. Grandin, the printer, gave it to me. If you ever saw a Book of Mormon you will see that they changed it afterwards."

"They did! Well, let us see your copy; that is a good point. How is it changed now?"

"I will show you (bringing out his copy). Here on the title page it says (reading), 'Joseph Smith, Jr., author and proprietor.' Afterwards, in getting out other editions, they left that out and only claimed that Joseph Smith translated it."

"Well, did they claim anything else than that he was the translator when they brought the manuscript to you?"

"Oh, no; they claimed that he was translating by means of some instruments which he got at the same time he did the plates, and that the Lord helped him."

Here, then, we find in 1881, still living in the neighborhood where Joseph spent his youth, the very person who in 1829-30 "set the type from the original manuscript for the Book of Mormon." This is a credible witness, put on the stand by the defendant in the case of *The Manuscript Found*, by Solomon Spalding, versus *The Book of the Mormon*, by Joseph Smith Junior, "author and proprietor." His testimony is worth noting. After the lapse of fifty-one years the old journeyman printer states: "I would know that manuscript today if I should see it." His memory is good. His eye brightens as his mind goes back to those early days in the little printing office out in the backwoods of western New York. One can see his face shine with his remembrance of the times when Hyrum Smith always brought the manuscript to the office, under his coat, "all buttoned up as carefully as though it was so much gold." And, then, his

mind's eye sees the manuscript, over which he had so labored, once more before him; and he adds, reflectively: "We had a great deal of trouble with it. It was not punctuated at all. They did not know anything about punctuation, and we had to do that ourselves."

Did Elder George Reynolds know what a providential witness for the truth this old printer was, in this testimony, delivered fifty-one years after the events described? His were the nimble fingers that set all the type of the entire book; and no changes from the manuscript were made, "because they would not allow us to"; although he adds, as if remembering all the sins of orthography upon its head, and wishing, like a good printer, to charge them to "copy," "there might have been one or two words that I changed the spelling of, but no more." And, then, he produces his own unbound copy of his work, done fifty-one years before, to show that he had kept his eye upon the changes that "they" had afterward made, noting in particular the change on the title-page, wherein "author and proprietor" had disappeared to make way for the new claim, "Translated by Joseph Smith Jun."

With this evidence (volunteered by the defense) well in mind, showing beyond a doubt that the *Book of Mormon*, as printed in Palmyra in 1830, is a true copy of the manuscript furnished the printer, let us see, from the same evidence, the exact way in which this manuscript was produced. We will call the same witness again, Elder George Reynolds, page 71 of *Myth of the Manuscript Found*, wherein, under the heading: "Time Occupied in Translating the Book of Mormon," he says:

Objection has been made to the divinity of the Book of Mormon on the ground that the account given in the publications of the Church of the time occupied in the work of translation is far too short for the accomplishment of such a labor, and consequently it must have been copied or transcribed from some work written in the English language, most probably from Spalding's 'Manuscript Found.' But at the outset it must be recollected that the translation was accomplished by no common method, by no ordinary means. It was done by divine aid.

There were no delays over obscure passages, no difficulties over the choice of words, no stoppages from the ignorance of the translator; no time was wasted in investigation or argument over the value, intent or meaning of certain characters, and there were no references to authorities. These difficulties to human work were removed. All was as simple as when a clerk writes from dictation. The translation of the characters appeared on the Urim and Thummim, sentence by sentence, and as soon as one was correctly transcribed, the next would appear. So the enquiry narrowed down to the consideration of this simple question, how much could Oliver Cowdery write in a day?"

Martin Harris, the first convert outside the Smith family, the farmer who, as Quaker, Baptist, Presbyterian, Redemptorist, and Universalist in rapid succession, and now, as Mormon, stood to "pay the printer," the man who knew as much about the process work out of which the *Book of Mormon* came (other than the prophet Joseph himself), as any living person, is thus quoted by the same witness, Elder Reynolds (page 91 of *Myth of the Manuscript Found*):

He said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone. Martin explained the translation as follows: By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say, "Written," and if correctly written that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly, it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used."

Thus far witness Elder George Reynolds. Now let us summon another, one M. T. Lamb, who in his work *The Golden Bible* (page 241), thus quotes David Whitmer's description of the process of inspired book-making. It will be remembered that David Whitmer was one of the "three witnesses" to the Book, the other two being Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris.¹ Whitmer testifies:

¹ "THE TESTIMONY OF THREE WITNESSES.—Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which

"After affixing the magical spectacles to his eyes Smith would take the plates and translate the characters one at a time. The graven characters would appear in succession to the seer, and directly under the character, when viewed through the glasses, would be the translation in English."

We will now call another witness, no less than the famous congressman-elect from Utah, Mr B. H. Roberts, who, in his *Brief History of the Church* (page 28), thus testifies:

The following is the manner in which it is said the Book of Mormon was translated: "The Prophet, scanning through the Urim and Thummim the golden pages, would see appear, in lieu of the strange characters engraved thereon, their equivalent in English words. These he would repeat, and the scribe, separated from him by a veil or curtain,

contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, his brethren, and also of the people of Jared, which came from the tower of which hath been spoken; and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety, that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shewn unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an Angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true; and it is marvellous in our eyes: Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things.—And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgement seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen. OLIVER COWDERY, DAVID WHITMER, MARTIN HARRIS."

"AND ALSO THE TESTIMONY OF EIGHT WITNESSES.—Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, Jr. the Author and Proprietor of this work, has shewn unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record, with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shewn unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety, that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen: and we lie not, God bearing witness of it. CHRISTIAN WHITMER, JACOB WHITMER, PETER WHITMER, JR. JOHN WHITMER, HIRAM PAGE, JOSEPH SMITH, SEN. HYRUM SMITH, SAMUEL H. SMITH."

would write them down. . . . Until the writing was correct in every particular, the words last given would remain before the eyes of the translator, and not disappear. But on the necessary correction being made, they would immediately pass away and be succeeded by others."

Thus far we have had Mormon witnesses only. They testify to the current Mormon belief of the origin of the manuscript from which the *Book of Mormon* was printed. An anti-Mormon writer, Dr Wyle, in his work, *Mormon Portraits* (page 203), quotes the death-bed statement of Emma Hale Smith, who, it will be remembered, became the prophet's first wife, in the year the angel permitted him to dig up the plates, as the latest step, the prophet stated, in preparation for his future work. This death-bed statement was made to her son Joseph, as follows:

"In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat with the stone in it."

Another anti-Mormon statement is taken from Kidder's *Mormonism and the Mormons* (page 32), published in 1842. It is here given because it reflects the origin of the Book as told by Isaac Hale, father of Mrs Emma Hale Smith, Joseph's first wife. The statement is as follows:

The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the book of plates was at the same time hid in the woods.

The picture of the prophet at work, thus drawn by his wife and by her father, in the privacy of the domestic circle, is startlingly graphic. Being members of the family, we are bound, however, to accept their testimony as that of peculiarly well qualified witnesses. That Joseph laid great stress upon his "Urim and Thummim" stone, sometimes called a "seer stone," all witnesses agree. Elder Reynolds, the witness put forward by the

Mormons themselves, is clear and without any ambiguity in his evidence on this point.

Now, having uncontradicted testimony as to the exact *modus operandi* whereby the world became the possessor of the original *Book of Mormon*, let us try to understand why a God, wholly capable of making such a wonderful revelation to mankind, should so bring it to pass that, having chosen His own agent, an admittedly uneducated youth, and having fully equipped him with mechanical appliances for translating from the Adamic characters on the golden plates into the common English tongue, by means of which appliances all human tendency to error should be absolutely eliminated,—by means of which, as the witness Reynolds states,—

there were no delays over obscure passages, no difficulties over the choice of words, no stoppages from the ignorance of the translator, no time wasted in investigation or argument over the value, intent or meaning of certain characters, and there were no references to authorities,

—let us try to understand, I repeat, why such an omnipotent and omniscient God should produce a work that, in less than threescore years, should have to receive in successive editions more than three thousand corrections in orthography and grammar! Why should such a God show such illiteracy? Elder Reynolds testifies,—let us recall him—

All was as simple as when a clerk writes from dictation. The translation of the characters appeared on the Urim and Thummim, sentence by sentence, and as soon as one was *correctly transcribed* the next would appear.

It thus appears that Smith was amanuensis only; the mistakes, all and each, were God's! Necessarily so; for Reynolds testifies that Martin Harris, the man who was Smith's first convert, was present and saw as much of the process work as God designed man—other than His prophet Joseph—to see during that time. And yet Harris, in his testimony, says: "By aid of

the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say, 'Written,' and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place; but if not written correctly *it remained until corrected*, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used."

These three thousand changes, then, are not typographical corrections. Comparison of the first edition with the latest shows that the pronoun "which" in the first is changed to *who* in the latest, over seven hundred times. The word is constantly found, in the first edition, in such sentences as: "Those men *which* we sent." "And those men *which* had been selected." "My men *which* had been wounded." "Our brethren *which* were slain." Seven hundred printer's errors in the illiterate use of the one word "which" for the relative pronoun *who* in a single volume! And yet Joseph, who was without knowledge of grammar, did not have the slightest option in selecting the words. The English words of the translation, every one of them, were set forth upon the golden page "in lieu of the strange characters engraved thereon," says the Hon. B. H. Roberts. These words Joseph would repeat, and the scribe, cut off from the prophet and his plates by a veil or curtain, would write them down. And so potent was the Urim and Thummim, that, *not until the writing was correct in every particular*, would the word last given yield place to its successor! Here, indeed, God took no chances for error. Here, indeed, do we find an inerrancy which is not indictable. And yet, if this be true, the original *Book of Mormon* indicts the latest edition of the *Book of Mormon*, published in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1891, by Geo. Q. Cannon & Sons Company, in that the said infallible first edition thus infallibly prepared, has been subjected to more than three thousand alleged "corrections"! Is it credible that God, after taking such excessive pains to compel an illiterate man to transmit, without error, so

wonderful a revelation to the wicked world, notwithstanding his illiteracy, should yet lay Himself open in later editions to such a multiplicity of "corrections"?

Let us see if we can explain why the word "which," for example, was used seven hundred times instead of the word *who*. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument only, the *Book of Mormon* to have been written by an impostor, of illiterate mind, yet who had an ear attuned to "revival Bible-readings," such as the new settlements in western New York were familiar with in the first quarter of this century. What would be more natural to such an impostor than ignorance of the fact that, in the days when King James' version was made, the word "which" was commonly used as referring to *persons*, but that after the lapse of more than two hundred years the word had in actual usage come to be universally employed as referring only to *things*. If such a person should undertake to originate a work like the first *Book of Mormon*, to be in sound, irrespective of sense, as like the sonorous English of the seventeenth century as possible, how easily would he fall into the trap set by that innocent-looking little word "which." More than seven hundred *whiches* in the *Book of Mormon*, by actual count of Mr Lamoni Call, of Bountiful, Utah! If the prophet and his councilors had only known that the pronoun "which" in King James' time was good English when referring to persons, but that it is not good English now, nor was it good English in 1829, they would have been spared the pains of the invention of the Urim and Thummim stone, by the operation of which their God has been made to masquerade as an idiot.

Joseph and the Mormon authorities have not left themselves any loop-hole for escape; for it must be remembered that Joseph had nothing to do with the three thousand mistakes which his original *Book of Mormon* contained, and that the God of the Mormons so arranged it that Joseph could not make a mistake! Accordingly, every correction made by the latest edition is an indictment of the omnipotence and omniscience of the God of

the Mormons. He was not a backwoodsman; He should have known what Joseph did not, and should have kept, as the Hon. B. H. Roberts, member-elect of the LVith Congress, says He could not help doing, the Urim and Thummim on the golden plates until the Day of Judgment even, rather than have permitted the first one of those three thousand and odd mistakes to find its way into the manuscript of the *Book of Mormon*, so carefully prepared and printed by the "author and proprietor" in 1830.

Let us conclude this examination with one more point of evidence taken from the original *Book of Mormon*. As the title-page shows, this book purports to be an abridgment of the records of a certain Lehi, who, with his family and certain others, people of Nephi and also the Lamanites, came from Jerusalem to America 600 B.C. They brought with them a body of gold plates containing the Old Testament Scriptures up to that time engraved thereon. These plates, of the greatest anthropological and ethnological interest, were wonderfully "hidden up" in a hillside in New York state and in due time revealed and translated by a special providence of God. So, for any portions of the Old Testament Scriptures which might happen to be contained in the *Book of Mormon*, we have a much more perfect translation than for the same portions as translated out of the original Hebrew by the rules of ordinary philology. These portions are not only better than the corresponding portions of the Bible, but they are absolutely perfect, if the Hon. B. H. Roberts is to be regarded as a veracious historian. Hence, if we wish to see how correctly the Hebrew Bible has been translated, a comparison of these parts would inform us. I quote from Lamoni Call's "Reasons for Making the Changes," (page 119):

There are thirty-eight pages in the Book of Mormon which are also in the Bible. Six and one-half of these are the sermon on the mount, which Christ delivered in America almost exactly as he did in Jerusalem. The third and fourth chapters of Malachi He quoted to them;

making eight and one-half pages from the Son of God direct. The other twenty-nine and one-half were taken from the golden plates, engraved thereon by the various writers.

Now, is not this a remarkable *contretemps*! These plates, brought over from Jerusalem 600 B.C., had the Sermon on the Mount engraved thereon in Adamic characters six centuries before it was delivered on the hills of Galilee. The *Book of Mormon* presents it in almost the same words in which it appears in King James' version. The Urim and Thummim made here no mistake. The "seer stone" did its infallible work when it translated from the plates whole chapters having their counterparts in King James' version! The fifth chapter of Isaiah is found on page 90 of the *Book of Mormon*. In the King James version we find, (verse 10): "Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of *an homer* shall yield an ephah." The *Book of Mormon* says: "Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of *a horner* shall yield an ephah."

Lamoni Call, the Mormon teacher at Bountiful, Utah, in his above-cited work, published in August, 1898, says (page 122), of this apparently simple mistake in typography, that it—

tells a big story to a printer. It is the change of "horner" to "homer." If the truth could be learned, I would bet all the old jack knives I had when I was a boy that I can now find, against anything you have a mind to put up, that *the Bible Joseph had behind the curtain* had a nicked "m," so that it looked somewhat like "rn." The word may have looked not very unlike "homer" [*horner* ?].

This, then, is what the *Book of Mormon* is, when interpreted by the light shed upon it by the Mormons themselves. It will be noted that not a word of accusation has been taken from their enemies. I have brought against it that legitimate criticism only which any book purporting to be of divine origin must be able to successfully confront. The well known rule, *falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*, applies. In this instance, indeed, the rule might well be reversed—*falsus in omnibus, falsus in uno*.

To follow the imposture thus sought to be foisted upon the world into practice and trace out the conduct of life which acceptance by its adherents must necessarily induce, though a most interesting branch of the subject, is beyond the scope of the present purpose. Not, however, necessarily because of the meanness of its origin is the Book to be condemned. But danger awaits any community whose individuals, after fully realizing what a monster of iniquity and deceit the Book is, still adhere to its teachings and its precepts merely because those teachings and precepts are not in themselves immoral. For, the *Book of Mormon* is not in itself immoral. There is no polygamy in it. On the contrary, it is expressly prohibited. The Mormons have been slandered and traduced, unjustly and without warrant, for an immoral "Bible." Whatever their practices may be under their doctrine of "a new revelation," however, which springs directly from their invention of the *Book of Mormon* itself, there is nothing immoral in the book. It is, on the contrary, only grotesque. It is a melange of plagiarisms from the Old and New Testaments, without order or regularity, easily traced, and intermingled with watery parodies of nothing in particular, signifying nothing. But, in this monstrosity, born of deceit and bred in falsehood, obliged to defend itself and its origin with inventions claiming miraculous interpositions of divine power, its adherents have discovered a most dangerous weapon against the moral world in this doctrine of "a continuing revelation." A hierarchy of subtle brains equipped with the wealth of the entire community, reinforced with a million dupes, willing to accept with unquestioning obedience any dispensation formulated in the terms of "Thus saith the Lord," is a portentous danger-sign to enlightened civilization. This is the menace to the world from Mormonism.